

buy it to read me." he went on coveting  
his thermos and 35 minutes from word one  
he was mumbling inaudibly and nearly  
fell from the stage.

I looked over at stetler who had been  
laughing all evening, then I looked back to  
the face of one of the ugliest men alive  
and wondered: is there some sort of sacrifice

going on here? knowing, that in the end there would  
be no forgetting his scarred face and performance.  
what he had been in his books was the real McCoy.  
I see santa claus coming down from the mountain.

#### OFFSPRING

three red and green rattlesnakes snap  
at each other across my back  
but never touch

life has been an army of pepper  
marching on my lungs

my mother is now locked in a padded  
cell where she sculpts  
and reads the classics  
beneath an unshaded light

my querulous father buys  
3 quarts of oso negro in mexico  
each month  
and is racked with varicose veins  
and premature baldness

i am here by myself  
with three restless rattlers dancing  
across my shoulder blades

doing all i can to overcome  
my genetics  
and sing my own song

#### WINGS

-- for Robert Peters

on a tour of the house  
i was taken from room to room  
a drawing of three dead  
elephants resting in african grass

then in the room beyond  
his son's bedroom hanging  
above the waterbed a mobile  
bobbing in the orange air  
several sets of wings with  
feathers folded back  
some with wide span and brown  
some tiny sets in ebony  
while  
balancing the wings were  
spent shotgun shells  
charred around the edges  
he was a young son  
who had put together  
a thing of beauty  
to sleep beneath

#### HEARTBEAT

a sweet woman lives nextdoor.  
she's married to a busy doctor who never  
pays her no mind,  
he just keeps her in silver thins & cold cream.

I can hear her arguing with the gods  
while throwing fresh eggs against the shower walls  
to loosen the knots of her frustrations.  
it is a bad scene.

lately, the talk up & down the block is,  
that some action will have to be initiated,  
maybe lock her in a bell-tower.  
she has all the local kids

gathered about her  
and involved in her practice.  
she roams the tract,  
stethoscope dangling about her neck

hunting for dogs to examine:  
st. bernards, beagles, danes, pomeranians.  
she listens to their heartbeats.  
i think it is funny.

the topper is,  
that the residents around here aren't  
worried about their children, no,  
but about their dogs.